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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes test results from all phases of the Dallas Independent School District testing program at a very global level. District achievement in 1981-82 can be viewed as a general improvement over that observed in 1980-81 which in turn marked a major improvement over preceding years. Appreciable gains were noted particularly among the District's minority students. These trends were observed at nearly all grade levels in all areas measured. The most pronounced gains in achievement continue to be seen in the early grades. Whereas a year ago this trend was observed in grades 1 through 4 or 5, in 1981-82 this trend continued through grades 5 or 6. In the secondary schools, however, year-to-year gains have not been so dramatic. Thus only slight improvement can be noted for grades 7 and 8, and virtually no change for grades 9 through 11. Thus, while District students match or even surpass the test performances of students nationally through elementary school, they do not maintain this pace as they progress through secondary school. (BW)

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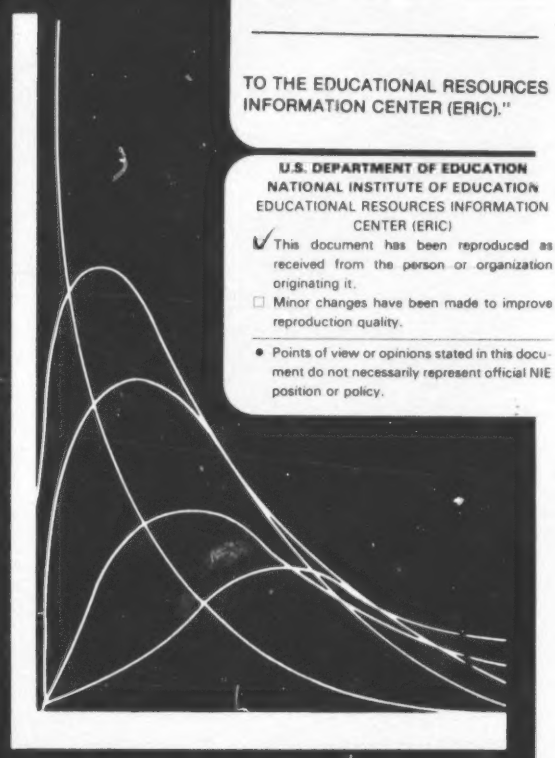
AN INTERPRETIVE ANALYSIS OF SYSTEM-WIDE ACHIEVEMENT DATA 1981-82

Dallas, Texas
August 1982



DEPARTMENT OF TESTING AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS

dallas independent school district

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AN INTERPRETIVE ANALYSIS OF SYSTEM-WIDE ACHIEVEMENT DATA, 1981-82

TIS82-800

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An Interpretive Analysis of System-wide Achievement Data, 1981-82

George H. Olson

Each year, the Dallas Independent School District makes a large investment in terms of time, personnel, and materials in an effort to collect and report data of the achievement of its student population. The overall purpose of this effort is to provide data for the improvement of curriculum and instruction. Test data are used by District personnel at all levels in the organization. Ultimately, test results are used by the General Superintendent and Board of Education as one means of demonstrating accountability to the general public.

The extent of this effort in testing can be readily appreciated from a simple listing of the various batteries of tests administered and a brief summary of the procedures followed in processing test data. During the school year District students, depending upon their particular grade level, are administered various combinations of the following batteries:

Metropolitan Readiness Tests (MRT)

Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS)

California Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS)

Tests of Achievement and Proficiency (TAP)

Assessment of Baseline Curriculum (ABC)

Basic Objectives Assessment Test (BOAT)

Texas Assessment of Basic Skills (TABS)

Answer sheets collected from students administered these tests are first scored (usually by machine, but occasionally by hand) and entered as student test records on computer files. Each test file is then subjected to an extensive screening and editing process in which student identification numbers, and sex, ethnic, grade level, and school location codes are validated. Following this process, the test files are merged with additional school-related data from various District-wide databases and with data from testing in previous years. The result is a research-oriented datafile from which a wide variety of descriptive, evaluation, and management reports are produced. These reports summarize the test data in several different ways, each designed to meet specific needs of different audiences. Thus, teachers and counsellors receive test score reports of individual students; principals each receive a comprehensive report describing their students' achievement, over two years, on all major components of the system-wide testing program; subdistrict administrators receive very detailed reports for their individual subdistricts and constituent schools; central administrators receive a variety of special reports detailing selected aspects of achievement (e.g., longitudinal achievement growth over several years); and Board members and executive-level administrators receive this report in which test results from all phases of the testing program are summarized at a very global level.

Since it is possible, in this report, only to give attention to the major highlights of the test results, it is expected that the reader desiring greater detail on current and past achievement within specific schools, grade levels, or ethnic groups will obtain the particular, relevant reports.

There are three major sections in this report: one dealing with District-wide achievement on each of the three standardized, norm-referenced test batteries administered through the District's system-wide testing program; a second dealing with District-wide performance, on the locally constructed Assessment of Baseline Curriculum (ABC), at grades 1-3, and the Basic Objectives Assessment Tests (BOAT), at grades 8-12; and a third, dealing with District-wide performance, at grades 3, 5, and 9, on the state-wide Texas Assessment of Basic Skills (TABS). No attempt has been made to draw comparisons among performances on the different types of tests. The differences among the batteries are great enough to require a level of analysis well beyond that which was attempted in summarizing each individually, as has been done here.

Before turning to the results of the system-wide testing program, some general comments concerning recent changes in District-wide testing policy and the types of scores reported, because they have bearing on the interpretation of the results that follow, are in order.

Changes in Testing Policy

In 1980 and 1981 testing was held in grades 1-11 in the spring. Beginning in 1979, when additional data first became available and hence the system-wide testing policies could be followed more closely, only a subset of special education students was included in test-score summary statistics; prior to 1979 all students tested were included. Thus, included in District-wide summaries of test results are those special education students who are served totally in regular or vocational education classes, not by, but sometimes with assistance from, special

education personnel. Also included are those who are pregnant or speech-impeded. Any other handicapped students, even though tested at the discretion of local school personnel, are excluded from the summaries.

Since 1978 four additional changes have been made in testing policy for the purpose of gaining more realistic measurements both of individual students' test performances and of group performance. The first change took the form of a systematic strategy for assigning test levels of the ITBS to students in grades 3-8 on the basis of previous test level and performance thereon; enforcement began in 1978-79. The second change classified a student as not realistically measured by the test if the student did not attempt a sufficient number of test items. In 1976-77 the minimum requirement for each subtest was a single item attempted, a default in the absence of any deliberate policy. In 1978-79 the minimum was set at five items attempted, and in 1979-80 it was raised to ten items where it has remained. In practice, any student who did not attempt the minimum number of items on each of four subtests in Language Arts, for example, was for reporting purposes regarded as not having been tested in Language Arts. The third change, made in 1980-81, was to exempt from ITBS-testing Hispanic and other limited English proficient students who had not been taught in the English-based program for at least seven months. The Hispanic students thus exempted were given instead the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills Espanol (CTBS Espanol). The fourth change, made in 1981-82, was to exempt from testing those students judged to be so skills-deficient that they could not be validly measured by testing. These exemption decisions were made at the campus level and resulted in a very small number of exempted students. All of

these policy changes, adopted for the purpose of achieving better measurement, have undoubtedly affected average student performance, perhaps by raising median scores by some unknown increment.

A summary of the numbers of students exempted from testing, by ethnic classification, for the various components of the system-wide testing program is given in Table 1. From this table, the following may be noted:

1. No students were exempted for skill deficiency on the TABS or BOAT, and few were exempted for this reason on either the norm-referenced tests or the ABC. In addition, no students were exempted for having limited English proficiency on the TABS, the reason being that state-wide testing policy for the TABS differs from local policy in terms of who may be exempted.

2. The proportions of enrollment exempted from norm-referenced tests among White and Black students were fairly close with proportions tending to be higher for Whites where differences were appreciable. These differences appear to have resulted from higher proportions of Whites being exempted by reason of being in special education.

3. Higher proportions of Whites were exempted for special education on the ABC, and TABS at grades 3 and 9.

4. The proportion of Hispanic enrollment exempted for having limited proficiency in English was considerably higher than that for the other major ethnic categories on the norm-referenced (not CTBS) tests. Most of these students were tested with the Spanish-language CTBS Espanol.

In addition to the District's policy with respect to exemptions, a stronger promotion-retention policy was adopted in the 1980-81 school year which altered the grade-configuration of students in the 1981-82 school year. By virtue of this policy social promotion has begun to be phased out. Fourteen percent of first graders were retained in first grade, thirteen percent of second graders in second grade, and eleven percent of third graders in third grade. These increased retentions can be expected to have influenced longitudinal group median scores. For instance a contingent of formerly low-scoring but now maturer students

Table 1

Summary of Exemptions from Components of System-wide Testing Program

Grade	All Students					White					Black					Hispanic				
	SE	LEP	SD	TOT	%	SE	LEP	SD	TOT	%	SE	LEP	SD	TOT	%	SE	LEP	SD	TOT	%
NORM REFERENCED TESTS[a]																				
K	95	350	3	448	4.9	21	6	0	27	1.3	53	3	2	58	1.3	21	329	1	351	14.4
1	261	1121	13	1395	12.1	110	6	1	117	4.1	107	2	5	114	2.2	43	1105	7	1155	35.4
2	402	784	4	1190	11.5	155	1	1	157	5.9	179	5	0	184	3.8	62	773	3	838	31.5
3	565	584	3	1152	11.2	216	3	3	222	8.5	232	1	0	233	4.8	117	573	0	690	26.3
4	657	198	9	864	8.7	222	0	2	224	8.6	302	1	2	305	6.2	125	186	4	315	14.2
5	735	176	4	915	8.7	232	1	0	233	8.5	367	0	1	368	7.0	133	167	3	303	13.2
6	756	160	14	930	9.4	207	0	4	211	7.9	437	0	9	446	8.6	108	151	1	260	13.1
7	614	75	44	733	7.4	166	0	15	181	6.8	350	0	26	376	7.6	96	51	3	150	7.5
8	589	50	11	650	6.6	132	1	0	133	5.1	367	0	10	377	7.1	88	35	1	124	6.9
9	553	212	0	765	7.3	151	1	0	152	5.2	336	2	0	338	6.1	65	109	0	174	9.9
10	515	41	0	556	5.9	162	0	0	162	5.9	294	1	0	295	5.8	54	33	0	87	6.5
11	388	16	0	404	5.2	138	0	0	138	5.4	204	0	0	204	4.9	42	15	0	57	5.8
ASSESSMENT OF BASELINE CURRICULUM (ABC)																				
1	261	283	4	548	4.7	110	3	1	114	4.0	107	2	2	111	2.1	43	273	1	317	9.7
2	401	168	3	572	5.6	153	0	1	154	5.8	180	3	0	183	3.8	62	162	2	226	8.5
3	564	167	3	734	7.1	214	0	3	217	8.3	233	0	0	233	4.8	117	161	0	278	10.6
TEXAS ASSESSMENT OF BASIC SKILLS (TABS)																				
3	557	0	0	557	5.4	215	0	0	215	8.2	228	0	0	228	4.7	114	0	0	114	4.3
5	724	0	0	724	6.9	228	0	0	228	8.3	362	0	0	362	6.9	131	0	0	131	5.7
9	549	0	0	549	5.2	148	0	0	148	5.1	336	0	0	336	6.1	64	0	0	64	3.6
10	500	0	0	500	5.3	159	0	0	159	5.8	282	0	0	282	5.5	54	0	0	54	4.1
11	382	0	0	382	4.9	137	0	0	137	5.3	200	0	0	200	4.8	41	0	0	41	4.2

[a]Includes MRT, ITBS, and TAP; not CTBS.

Note. SE = Special education exemption; LEP = limited English proficiency exemption; SD = skill deficiency exemption; TOT = total number of exemptions; % = percent of enrollment exempted.

Table 1 (continued)

Summary of Exemptions from Components of System-wide Testing Program

Grade	All Students					White					Black					Hispanic				
	SE	LEP	SD	TOT	%	SE	LEP	SD	TOT	%	SE	LEP	SD	TOT	%	SE	LEP	SD	TOT	%
BASIC OBJECTIVES ASSESSMENT TEST (BOAT)																				
8	84	2	0	89	5.0	130	0	0	130	5.0	348	0	0	348	6.5	87	2	0	89	5.0
9	64	15	0	79	4.5	149	1	0	150	5.1	336	0	0	336	6.1	64	15	0	79	4.5
10	54	2	0	56	4.2	159	0	0	159	5.8	282	0	0	282	5.5	54	2	0	56	4.2
11	41	1	0	42	4.3	137	0	0	137	5.3	201	0	0	201	4.9	41	1	0	42	4.3
12	17	0	0	17	2.3	110	0	0	110	4.5	168	0	0	168	4.7	17	0	0	17	2.3

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was present in large numbers for testing in grades 1-3; thus, for example in grade 3, some 1,300 formerly low-scoring grade-2 students had not been promoted into grade 3 and hence were not present to depress the grade-3 median scores; however, some 1,000 formerly low-scoring grade-3 students had not been promoted out of grade 3 and hence were present to affect the grade-3 median-scores.

Changes in Test Forms of the ITBS

Form 5 of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) was used in 1978 and 1979. In 1980 and 1981 Form 7 of the same test battery was used in grades 1 and 2, and Form 8 was used in grades 3-8. The change to Forms 7 and 8 in 1980 required that student test records from earlier years be updated to conform to the 1978 norming of the new forms. For this purpose the test publisher provided a table of scores for converting old grade-equivalent scores to new grade-equivalent scores on all subtests in grades 3-8. A local strategy was followed to convert old scores in grades 1-2; two independent methods (single-parameter latent trait modeling and equi-percentile scaling), corroborating each other's results, were used to convert old raw scores to new raw scores. Because of time constraints score conversion efforts in grades 1 and 2 were limited to two tests, reading and mathematics.

National and Large-city Norms

Large-city norms are a subset of the national norms based upon data from only those students in large-city school districts. In earlier years (prior to the 1978 norms) large-city norms were not too different from national norms. However, when the two sets of more recent,

currently used norms on the ITBS were examined closely it was evident that a much larger difference existed between them than had existed in the past. While detailed technical and demographic information concerning the norming samples was not available at the time this report was written, it is presumed that the large difference reflected, among other things, a greater predominance of educationally disadvantaged students in large cities. To some undetermined extent, then, large-city norms control for the different populations served by the nation's cities and their school systems. The reasons notwithstanding, the result is that performance when compared to large-city norms will generally appear considerably more favorable than when compared to national norms; this is especially the case among poorer-achieving students. National norms, then, represent a more severe standard of comparison.

In this report, achievement is summarized in terms of both national and large-city norms. Both comparisons are important for a full appreciation of the District's achievement status. On the one hand it is informative to note how District students compare with students throughout the country without regard to type of community, while on the other hand it is important to realize that Dallas schools are, in many ways, more typical of those found in other large cities than to school systems in general. In this latter case, the large-city norms may represent a more meaningful standard of comparison.

Norm-referenced Achievement

"Norm-referenced" achievement refers to an interpretation of achievement as it relates to some "norm," in this case the average

performance observed in a national standardization sample. Thus, norm-referenced tests are used to make comparative statements such as, "The District was above average in reading" and "District reading performance was closer to the national average than was its mathematics performance." On the other hand, it is considerably more difficult, using norm-referenced tests, to make interpretations of achievement in an absolute, rather than relative, sense. Norm-referenced tests tell us little about what specific skills have been attained and even less about what District and/or state-wide attainment objectives have been met. Nevertheless, norm-referenced results are important for at least two reasons: they allow us to interpret the status of District achievement in relation to that of national reference groups, and, because they tend to be quite general in their content, they provide for the assessment of long-term, diffuse educational effects.

The norm-referenced tests administered District-wide through the system-wide testing program are:

(1) the Metropolitan Readiness Tests (MRT), administered to kindergarten children;

(2) the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS), administered to boys and girls in grades 1-8; and

(3) the Tests of Achievement and Proficiency (TAP), administered to young people in grades 9-11.

In this section, District-wide performance on these test batteries is summarized.

Achievement in Kindergarten

The District's kindergartners were administered Level 2 of the MRT in spring 1982. On the MRT performance is reported in stanines and, for the

pre-reading composite subtest, percentiles. Stanines are further grouped into three categories: low (stanines 1-3), average (stanines 4-6), and high (stanines 7-9). A summary of MRT performance showing median percentiles on the pre-reading composite and the percent of pupils classified as average or above average in pre-reading, language, and quantitative skills is given in Table 2. District-wide, performance on the pre-reading, language, and quantitative components of the MRT remained the same, or declined slightly in 1981-82 in comparison with the previous year; although in comparison with national norms, District kindergartners fared very well. It may be recalled that in 1980-81 District kindergarten pupils exhibited an appreciable increase in achievement performance over that seen in earlier years. This appreciable increase appears to have been maintained in 1981-82.

Achievement in the Grade Levels

Grades 1-8. A year ago (1980-81) it was noted that marked improvements in achievement had been realized in grades 1 through 8, as measured by the ITBS, in reading, language arts, and mathematics. On the average, by the end of 1980-81, District students at these grade levels were performing, in terms of national norms, at the 35th percentile in reading, and the 44th percentile in language arts and mathematics. In general, although not as pronounced, this trend continued through 1981-82. Thus, by the end of this past year, the average District student in grades 1 through 8 was scoring at the 37th, 49th, and 44th national percentile in reading, language arts, and mathematics, respectively.

TABLE 2

Summary of Kindergarten Performance in
Reading, Language, and Quantitative Skills
on the Metropolitan Readiness Tests

	All Races		White		Black		Hispanic	
	80-81	81-82	80-81	81-82	80-81	81-82	80-81	81-82
Reading								
Median	55	55	68	66	49	49	55	51
Pct. ≥ Average	80	80	88	88	77	77	82	79
Language								
Pct. ≥ Average	72	71	82	81	69	69	65	60
Quantitative Skills								
Pct. ≥ Average	77	74	86	85	71	70	79	74

When compared with their peers in other large-city school districts, District students, in grades 1-8, in 1980-81, scored at the 61st, 65th, and 63rd percentile in reading, language arts, and mathematics; whereas, in 1981-82, the average student in these grade levels scored at the 64th, 70th, and 66th percentile in reading, language arts, and mathematics -- again, a demonstration of modest improvement. While these statistics reflect only modest improvement over the previous year, it should be recalled that in 1980-81 the improvement in achievement over previous years was substantial.

These results are displayed in Table 3 along with similar summary statistics for each of the District's three major ethnic populations. Table 3 shows that while gains were observed for all three ethnic groups the most appreciable gains were made by the District's minority students.

Table 3 also shows that important gains were made in the percentages of students of all ethnicities scoring at or above the national (and large-city) median (50th) percentile. Again, gains were noted among all ethnic groups. In fact, in comparison with large-city school districts, the District had a higher than average percentage of higher-scoring students in all subject areas in both 1980-81 and 1981-82.

High schools. High school performance on the TAP in 1980-81 is summarized in Tables 4 and 5 along with similar summaries for the grade configurations: 1-3, 4-6, and 7-8. In comparison with the previous year (1980-81), the performance level for the District's high schools evidenced slight improvement, but continued low by comparison with the national norming sample and, to a lesser extent, its large-city component. The table shows, among other things, that roughly half the

TABLE 3

Median Percentiles and Percentages At or Above the 50th Percentile for Grades 1 through 8 Aggregated

	All Races		White		Black		Hispanic	
	80-81	81-82	80-81	81-82	80-81	81-82	80-81	81-82
Reading								
Median %tile								
National	35	37	56	57	27	32	29	33
Large City	61	64	81	82	51	56	52	59
Pct ≥ 50th %tile								
National	35	38	57	59	26	29	27	30
Large City	60	64	79	81	52	57	54	59
Language								
Median %tile								
National	44	49	62	65	35	42	38	44
Large City	65	70	81	82	58	65	61	65
Pct ≥ 50th %tile								
National	44	49	62	66	36	43	37	43
Large City	65	71	80	83	58	65	61	68
Mathematics								
Median %tile								
National	44	44	60	62	28	36	35	41
Large City	63	68	80	82	51	59	59	65
Pct ≥ 50th %tile								
National	41	45	60	64	31	36	36	41
Large City	61	66	79	81	51	58	58	65

TABLE 4

National Norm Quartile and Percentage Distributions
of Students by Grade-Level Configuration

	Grades 1-3		Grades 4-6		Grades 7,8		Grades 9-11	
	'81	'82	'81	'82	'81	'82	'81	'82
Reading								
First Quartile	23	27	11	14	9	9	10	11
Median	43	45	31	35	26	29	27	27
Third Quartile	69	69	60	63	53	53	55	54
≥ 25th %tile	74	78	59	63	53	55	52	53
≥ 50th %tile	43	45	33	36	26	28	28	28
≥ 75th %tile	20	20	15	16	10	11	14	13
≥ 30th %tile		71		56		48		45
Language								
First Quartile	26	32	19	26	11	13	13	14
Median	51	55	44	49	31	35	30	33
Third Quartile	75	79	70	73	58	62	59	59
≥ 25th %tile	77	83	69	75	57	61	58	60
≥ 50th %tile	51	57	44	50	32	36	33	34
≥ 75th %tile	28	31	21	23	14	16	15	15
≥ 30th %tile		78		72		56		54
Mathematics								
First Quartile	23	31	11	16	7	9	10	12
Median	50	54	36	41	27	30	25	28
Third Quartile	75	76	63	66	53	58	52	53
≥ 25th %tile	74	80	61	67	52	56	51	53
≥ 50th %tile	51	57	38	42	28	31	27	28
≥ 75th %tile	26	29	17	18	13	14	12	12
≥ 30th %tile		76		61		51		48

TABLE 5

Large-city Norm Quartile and Percentage Distributions of Students by Grade-level Configurations

	Grades 1-3		Grades 4-6		Grades 7,8		Grades 9-11	
	'81	'82	'81	'82	'81	'82	'81	'82
Reading								
First Quartile	41	45	27	32	24	29	20	22
Median	64	67	60	63	55	59	44	44
Third Quartile	83	83	86	87	84	84	72	70
≥ 25th %tile	86	90	77	81	75	76	70	71
≥ 50th %tile	66	71	58	62	56	57	45	45
≥ 75th %tile	36	37	38	41	35	36	21	21
≥ 30th %tile		88		78		73		65
Language								
First Quartile	44	52	36	47	22	26	20	21
Median	68	73	68	73	58	62	45	47
Third Quartile	86	88	86	87	81	84	72	74
≥ 25th %tile	88	91	82	87	73	76	68	70
≥ 50th %tile	68	75	67	73	56	60	47	49
≥ 75th %tile	41	46	42	48	33	37	24	25
≥ 30th %tile		89				73		65
Mathematics								
First Quartile	37	47	27	35	21	24	19	22
Median	69	72	62	65	52	56	43	43
Third Quartile	86	87	85	86	79	82	70	70
≥ 25th %tile	84	89	76	82	72	75	69	73
≥ 50th %tile	67	74	59	65	52	56	43	45
≥ 75th %tile	43	48	37	41	30	33	21	21
≥ 30th %tile		86		79		71		66

District's high school students performed no better than the lowest 25 percent nationally. At the other end of the scale, only 12 to 15 percent of the District's high school students performed at levels comparable to the top 25 percent nationally.

It was stated earlier that it is important to consider District performance in terms of large-city norms in addition to national norms. When this is done in the case of high school performance the interpretation is that while District students may perform at a level below their large-city peers, they are not far below.

Grade-level performance. Tables 4 and 5 also display aggregated summary statistics for achievement in grades 1-3, 4-6, and 7-8, in terms of national norms (Table 4) and large-city norms (Table 5). When high school performance is compared with performance at lower grade-level configurations the picture that emerges is one that places high schools at the end of a decline that begins after elementary school. This trend of decreasing achievement test performance with increasing grade level is even more evident in Table 6 where performances by grade level are displayed for each of three ethnic subpopulations for 1981-82 and the preceding year. The table shows national and large-city median percentiles attained by the average student in grades 1 through 11 on the ITBS and TAP. In the table the trend discussed in the previous paragraph is evident: performance is highest in the elementary grades and falls off at higher grade levels.

On the other hand, Table 6 provides some very positive implications for the District. Since small differences are not meaningful, the table shows that in nearly all grade levels, among all ethnic subpopulations,

and in all content areas, student performance in 1981-82 equaled or exceeded the performance observed in 1980-81. The improvements among the District's minority populations, especially across grades two through six (and sometimes beyond) were particularly noteworthy. Whereas, the achievement of District White students essentially remained unchanged from the previous year, minority student performance, at several grade levels, improved markedly in all three achievement areas. Again, it should be noted that these improvements follow substantial improvements in 1980-81.

The majority of the District's White students continued to be included among the national sample's highest scoring students at all grade levels in all areas tested. Among large-city school districts, nearly three-fourths of the District's White students were included in this group of high-scorers at all grade levels in all areas. On the other hand, while their relative standing improved considerably, especially at elementary school grade levels, minority students did not compare nearly as favorably with the national sample, but in several instances equaled or approximated the performance of students in the large-city norming sample.

In summary, the results of the 1981-82 norm-referenced testing program can be viewed as a continuation of the encouraging trend noted the previous year. While District-wide achievement levels were generally similar to those observed in 1980-81, important improvements in level of performance were particularly noted among the District's minority students. Even without comparison to the previous year, the 1981-82

TABLE 6

District-wide Median National and Large-city Percentiles by Grade Level

	All Races		White		Black		Hispanic	
	80-81	81-82	80-81	81-82	80-81	81-82	80-81	81-82
	READING							
Grade 1								
Nat	51	51	67	63	47	47	43	47
LC	68	68	79	77	64	64	60	64
Grade 2								
Nat	44	48	63	60	41	44	37	41
LC	66	69	81	79	63	66	60	63
Grade 3								
Nat	37	39	53	53	26	37	32	37
LC	61	64	76	76	48	59	55	61
Grade 4								
Nat	33	36	57	57	25	29	29	31
LC	61	63	82	82	49	55	55	58
Grade 5								
Nat	27	33	58	60	22	25	23	25
LC	54	62	84	86	46	52	49	52
Grade 6								
Nat	33	36	58	60	23	28	25	33
LC	62	67	85	86	49	56	51	62
Grade 7								
Nat	25	26	50	52	18	20	20	23
LC	52	55	81	82	41	46	46	50
Grade 8								
Nat	29	30	55	56	19	20	23	23
LC	61	64	86	87	45	47	51	51
Grade 9								
Nat	24	26	54	51	15	16	22	22
LC	44	46	74	72	30	33	42	42
Grade 10								
Nat	27	27	78	60	16	17	25	25
LC	45	45	73	74	29	31	42	42
Grade 11								
Nat	29	29	59	59	15	16	25	25
LC	44	44	70	70	26	28	39	39

(continued on next page)

Note. Nat = National; LC = Large City

TABLE 6 (continued)

District-wide Median National and Large-city Percentiles by Grade Level

	All Races		White		Black		Hispanic	
	80-81	81-82	80-81	81-82	80-81	81-82	80-81	81-82
	LANGUAGE (WRITTEN EXPRESSION)[a]							
Grade 1								
Nat	51	51	61	61	46	51	41	46
LC	65	65	74	74	62	65	58	62
Grade 2								
Nat	47	53	59	59	47	53	40	47
LC	65	70	74	74	65	70	59	65
Grade 3								
Nat	54	63	72	74	46	59	49	59
LC	73	79	85	86	66	77	68	77
Grade 4								
Nat	46	53	66	68	37	44	44	46
LC	69	75	83	84	61	67	67	69
Grade 5								
Nat	44	50	65	67	34	44	42	46
LC	68	73	83	84	58	68	66	70
Grade 6								
Nat	35	46	63	67	31	38	34	42
LC	65	71	83	85	56	63	60	69
Grade 7								
Nat	31	35	56	59	22	27	27	30
LC	56	62	80	82	43	50	50	54
Grade 8								
Nat	31	35	57	59	22	26	25	28
LC	58	63	80	82	45	51	49	55
Grade 9								
Nat	30	34	52	52	20	26	26	30
LC	46	50	71	71	31	39	39	46
Grade 10								
Nat	32	32	59	62	23	23	32	32
LC	45	45	72	75	32	32	45	45
Grade 11								
Nat	30	30	60	60	16	20	27	30
LC	43	43	71	71	26	29	39	43

(continued on next page)

[a]For grades 1-8, entries reflect scores on the ITBS language subtest; for grades 9-11, entries reflect scores on the TAP written expression subtest.

TABLE 6 (continued)

District-wide Median National and Large-city Percentiles by Grade Level

	All Races		White		Black		Hispanic	
	80-81	81-82	80-81	81-82	80-81	81-82	80-81	81-82
MATHEMATICS								
Grade 1								
Nat	50	56	66	66	43	50	50	50
LC	68	72	79	79	63	68	68	68
Grade 2								
Nat	50	54	67	67	41	50	45	50
LC	71	74	83	83	63	71	67	71
Grade 3								
Nat	43	54	61	68	35	47	43	51
LC	66	75	80	84	58	69	66	72
Grade 4								
Nat	38	41	57	60	28	34	31	41
LC	62	65	79	81	51	59	55	65
Grade 5								
Nat	37	39	60	60	26	34	34	39
LC	62	65	83	83	49	59	59	65
Grade 6								
Nat	36	38	59	61	22	29	34	38
LC	62	65	82	83	45	54	59	65
Grade 7								
Nat	26	30	52	54	16	20	22	28
LC	50	55	79	80	36	41	44	52
Grade 8								
Nat	27	29	53	56	17	20	23	27
LC	54	56	79	80	37	43	48	54
Grade 9								
Nat	25	25	53	53	17	20	23	23
LC	43	43	73	73	30	36	39	39
Grade 10								
Nat	27	27	52	52	18	21	27	27
LC	43	43	70	70	29	34	43	43
Grade 11								
Nat	24	28	53	53	16	19	27	28
LC	38	43	68	68	24	30	39	43

achievement results generally compared favorably to national norms, especially the national large-city norms. This is not to say, however, that there is not need for improvement. The results show that as grade level increases, achievement level decreases, on the average, relative to the norm groups. Also, the low achievement performance of minority students as compared to White students remains a matter of concern. Nevertheless, there is clear evidence that the District recently has made important strides in improving the achievement levels of its minority students.

Achievement Growth

Growth in achievement can be viewed from several perspectives. One way of looking at growth is to consider achievement across grade levels at a single point in time. This has been done in Figures 1-3 where median grade-equivalent scores and interquartile grade-equivalent ranges for 1981-82 on the ITBS are graphed for reading, language, and mathematics. Each bar in the figure represents the interquartile range of grade-equivalent scores for a particular grade level. That is, each bar represents the range of grade-equivalent scores attained by the middle 50 percent of the students at a particular grade level. The horizontal line dividing a bar roughly into half corresponds to the median grade-equivalent score for a particular grade level.

In the national standardization sample for the ITBS, median grade-equivalent scores increase in direct correspondence with grade level. Thus, for a spring administration the median national grade equivalent score for grade 1 is 1.7; for grades 2, 3, etc., it is 2.7,

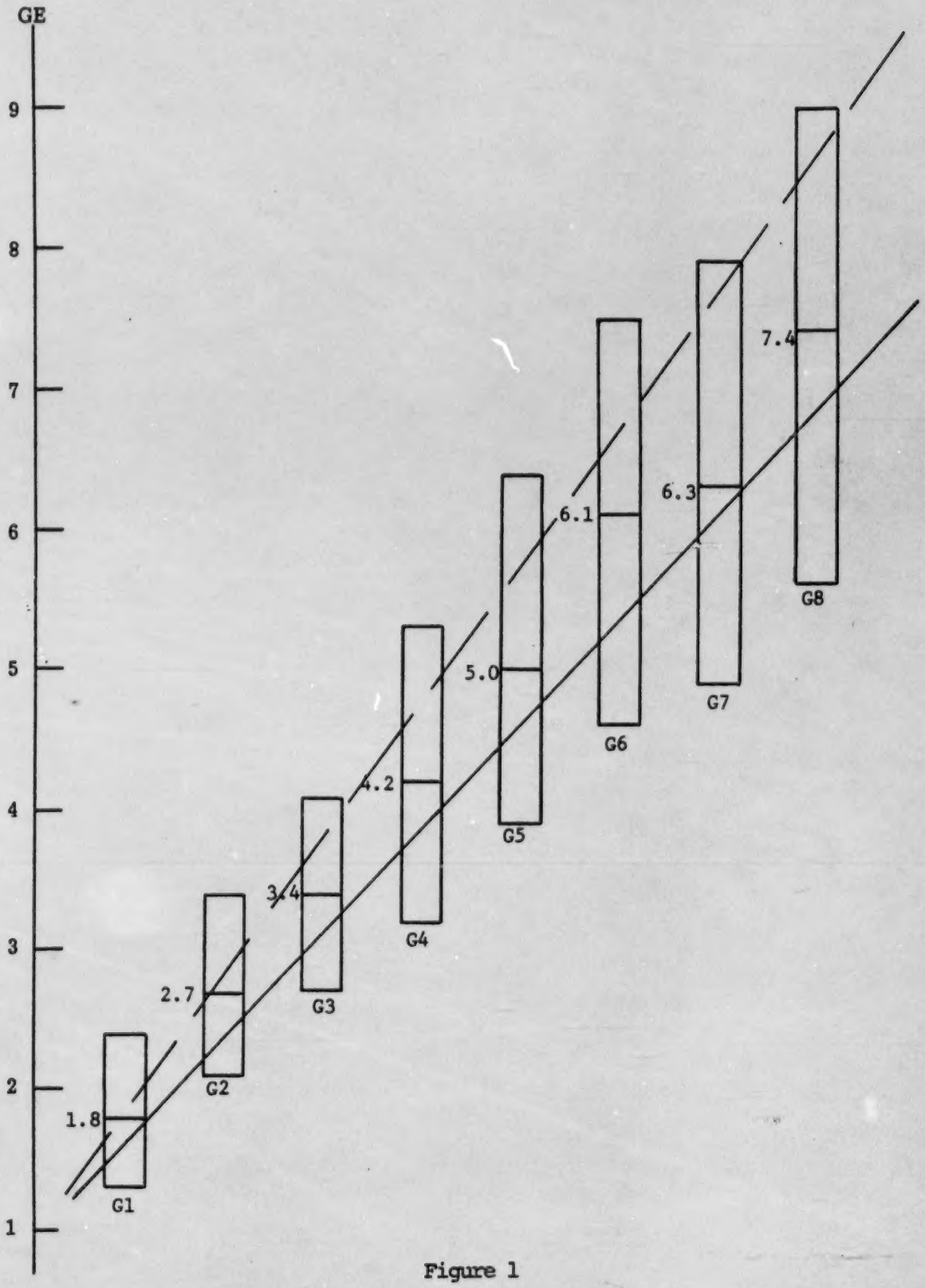

Figure 1

Median Grade Equivalents and
Interquartile Ranges in Reading

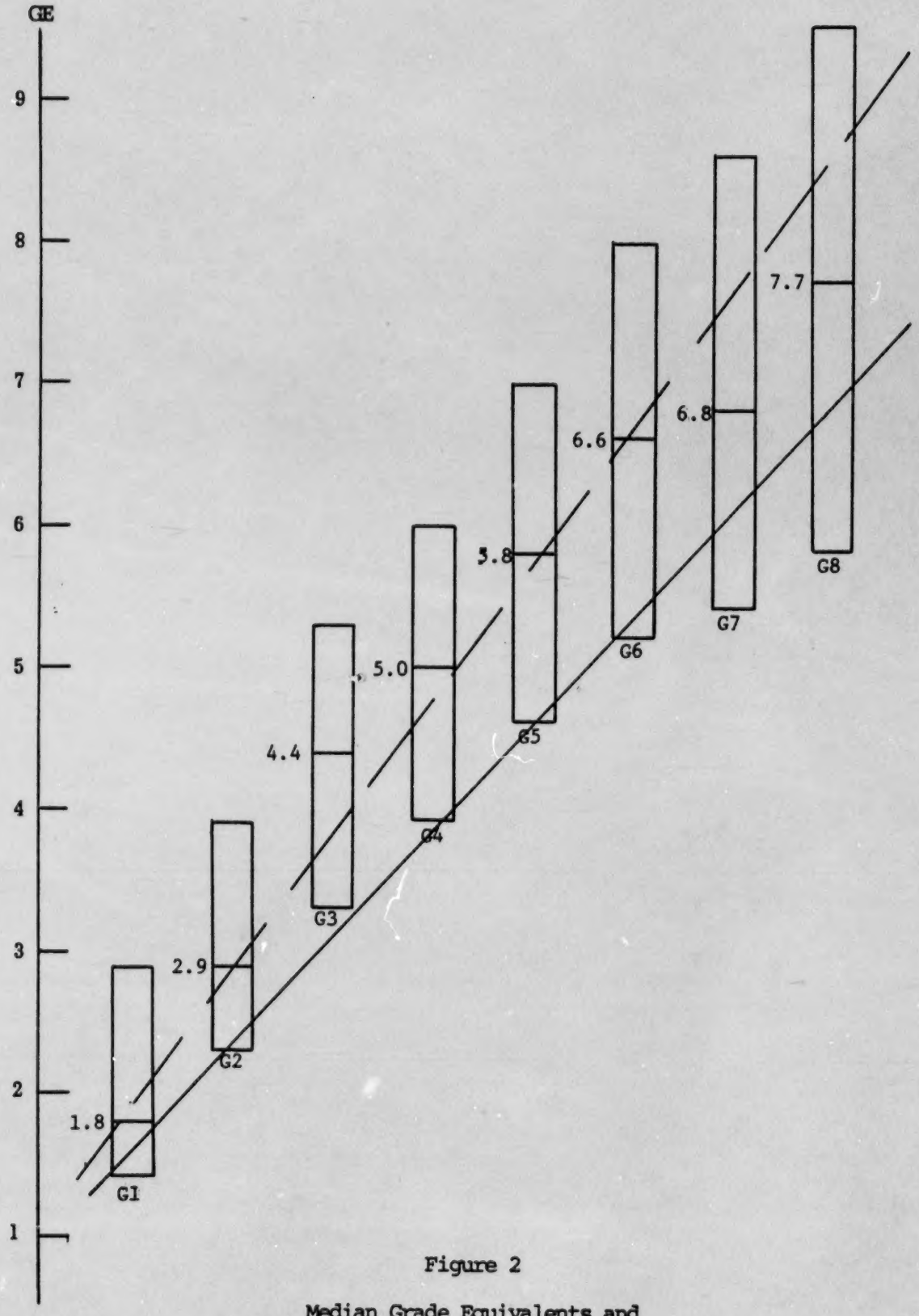

Figure 2

Median Grade Equivalents and
Interquartile Ranges in Language Arts

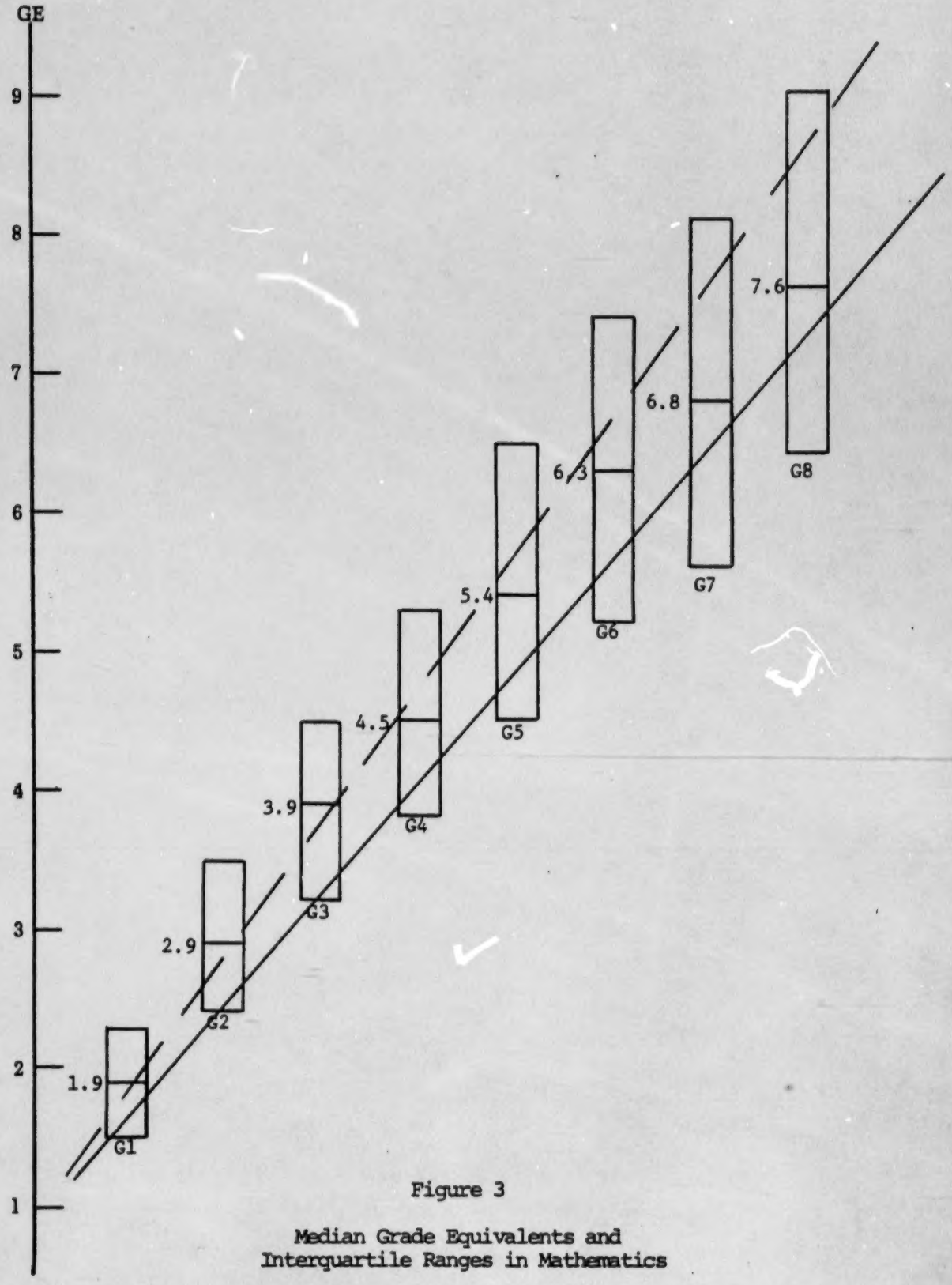

Figure 3

Median Grade Equivalents and
Interquartile Ranges in Mathematics

3.7, and so on. These national medians are shown as dotted lines in the figures. Among large-city school districts, however, grade equivalent scores do not increase as sharply across grade levels. Rather, the median grade-equivalent scores by grade level for the large-city norming sample are as shown by the solid lines in the figure.

Figures 1-3 show that District-wide achievement in reading, language arts, and mathematics mirrored closely the achievement levels of the national norming sample in grades 1 through 5 or 6. In all three areas, however, achievement fell off markedly at grade 7. With respect to the large-city component, District-wide achievement levels were consistently above average across all eight grade levels. The figures also show that the range of achievement levels (the length of the bars) increased in direct relation to grade level. This phenomenon is typical and reflects the fact that students become more "spread out" in terms of achievement at higher grade levels. Thus, as students mature, higher achieving students improve at a faster rate than average, while poorer achieving students achieve at a slower rate than average.

The sudden fall-off in achievement from grade 6 to grade 7 is peculiar, but has been observed in previous years. It is also evident in the tables of percentiles given earlier. This effect implies that, in comparison with year-to-year growth in achievement at other grade levels, relatively little growth (especially in reading and language arts) occurs in grade 7. It is possible that this "seventh-grade slump" reflects a shift in curriculum emphasis in the District's secondary schools. It may also reflect subtle changes in the maturation process. Whatever the reason, the phenomenon is real and, perhaps, deserves to be researched.

A second way to look at achievement growth is to consider changes in achievement at particular grade levels over years (i.e., quasi-longitudinal achievement trends). A study of achievement trends considered from this perspective is reported in Longitudinal Achievement Trends, 1976-82 (Meier, 1982a). In that report, median percentiles and percentages of students at or above the national (and large-city) median are given by grade level, ethnicity, and subdistrict, in reading, language, and mathematics, over several years beginning with the fall test administration in 1976. Data were available for six years at grades 2, 4, and 8, for five years at grades 1, 3, and 5 through 7, and for three years at grades 9 through 11.[1] A few points should be remembered. Beginning in 1981, but not in earlier years, an achievement test printed in Spanish--Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills Espanol (CTBS Espanol)--was given to elementary Hispanic students who would likely have been unreliably measured by the usual ITBS in English. The performance of these Spanish-tested students was not included in this longitudinal study of achievement. Also, a relatively small number of students were excluded from testing in 1982 by reason of being skill deficient. In addition, in 1982, by virtue of the District's new promotion/retention policy, appreciable numbers of students were retained in grades 1-3. One way in which this policy could have influenced longitudinal results was discussed earlier under the sub-section on changes in testing policy. A second influence is due to the fact that

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[1]Recall that Form 5 of the ITBS was used in grades 1-8 in 1978 and 1979. Scores for those years reported herein, however, have been updated to conform to the 1978 norming of Forms 7 and 8 used in 1980 and 1981.

retained students were excluded by definition from the cohort-longitudinal analysis; thus, for example in grade 3, some 1,300 formerly low-scoring grade-2 students were excluded from the grade 2-3 (from 1981 to 1982) cohort because they were not present to be tested in grade 3 in 1982. Similarly, some 1,000 formerly low-scoring grade 3 students were excluded from the grade 2-3 cohort because they were not present to be tested in grade 2 in 1981. The net effect of these two kinds of exclusions was likely one of raising both pretest and posttest medians by some unknown increment. All of these facts should be taken into account when interpreting the longitudinal results that follow.

Shown in Tables 7a and 7b are quasi-longitudinal achievement trends for grades 1 through 11 (Table 7a shows trends in terms of national norms, while Table 7b displays these in terms of large-city norms). Several positive trends appear there as strong and sustained across years. Among these were improvements on all three tests in grades 1-8 from 1976 or 1978 to 1982. The high median scores once reached in mathematics in grade 1 in 1979 were lost in 1980 and have been fully recovered in 1982. High median scores in language arts attract attention now. All of these positive trends slowed in 1982 in reading at grades 1-3 and 6-8 and in mathematics at grades 2, 4-6, and 8. In grades 9-11 the hints of positive growth from 1980 to 1981 slowed considerably in 1982. However, growth continued in reading and language arts at grade 9 and mathematics at grade 11. No negative trends appeared in any grade at this level of aggregation; however, while not shown they sometimes occurred within ethnic groups and within subdistricts.

Table 7a

Quasi-Longitudinal National Median Percentile Scores for Several Quasi-cohorts

		WHITE			BLACK			HISPANIC			ALL RACES		
GRADE	YEAR	R	L	M	R	L	M	R	L	M	R	L	M
1	1978	47		56	39		38	35		33	39		44
	1979	51		66	43		50	35		44	43		56
	1980	59	51	61	39	41	38	31	26	33	41	41	44
	1981	67	61	66	47	46	44	43	41	50	51	51	50
	1982	63	61	66	47	51	50	47	46	50	51	51	56
2	1976	44		50	21		20	24		24	28		29
	1978	41		50	29		22	25		27	32		31
	1979	48		59	29		31	22		31	32		36
	1980	54	53	59	32	40	36	25	26	31	34	40	41
	1981	63	59	67	41	47	41	37	40	45	44	47	50
	1982	60	59	67	44	53	50	41	47	50	48	53	54
3	1978	45	65	47	19	38	13	19	32	16	26	46	20
	1979	53	65	58	24	38	16	21	35	23	32	46	27
	1980	51	63	58	24	32	27	21	32	31	29	41	35
	1981	53	72	61	26	46	35	32	49	43	37	54	43
	1982	53	74	68	37	59	47	37	59	51	39	63	54
4	1976	40	37	30	12	13	2	14	15	4	18	20	8
	1978	41	46	34	13	17	3	13	18	7	19	24	11
	1979	48	55	50	15	22	9	17	24	13	25	35	19
	1980	55	62	54	19	28	19	23	31	28	29	37	31
	1981	57	66	57	25	37	28	29	44	31	33	46	38
	1982	57	68	60	29	44	34	31	46	41	36	53	41
5	1978	41	42	31	10	16	3	11	17	5	17	22	8
	1979	49	53	45	17	20	9	18	28	16	23	32	18
	1980	49	57	53	18	26	18	20	30	26	23	36	28
	1981	58	65	60	22	34	26	23	42	34	27	44	37
	1982	60	67	60	25	44	34	25	46	39	33	50	39
6	1976	44	41	38	5	7	1	10	13	6	13	15	9
	1979	44	47	43	14	16	7	15	21	16	20	26	20
	1980	50	56	54	15	21	14	20	26	26	25	31	26
	1981	58	63	58	23	31	22	25	34	34	33	39	36
	1982	60	67	61	28	38	29	33	42	38	36	46	38
7	1978	41		36	5		2	9		4	14		7
	1979	44	42	44	9	12	4	10	14	7	15	20	11
	1980	45	50	46	14	18	12	14	20	18	22	26	22
	1981	50	56	52	18	22	16	20	27	22	25	31	26
	1982	52	59	54	20	27	20	23	30	28	26	35	30
8	1976	44	39	35	6	6	2	11	13	5	13	17	9
	1978	45		35	6		2	11		5	14		6
	1979	46	43	45	8	10	3	12	16	10	16	18	11
	1980	53	54	51	14	16	13	16	19	19	23	25	22
	1981	55	57	53	19	22	17	23	25	23	29	31	27
	1982	56	59	56	20	26	20	23	28	27	30	35	29
9	1980	51	50	50	14	20	12	20	23	20	24	26	23
	1981	54	52	53	15	20	17	22	26	23	24	30	25
	1982	51	52	53	16	26	20	22	30	23	26	34	25
10	1980	54	56	49	13	19	15	24	26	24	25	29	24
	1981	58	59	52	16	23	18	25	32	27	27	32	27
	1982	60	62	52	17	23	21	25	32	27	27	32	27
11	1980	55	56	53	13	14	13	23	25	22	27	27	24
	1981	59	60	53	15	16	16	25	27	24	29	30	24
	1982	59	60	53	16	20	19	25	30	28	29	30	28

NOTE. R = READING. M = MATHEMATICS. L = SPELLING IN GRADES 1-2, LANGUAGE ARTS IN GRADES 3-8, AND WRITTEN EXPRESSION IN GRADES 9-11.

Table 7b

Quasi-longitudinal Large-city Median Percentile Scores for Several Quasi-cohorts

		WHITE			BLACK			HISPANIC			ALL RACES		
GRADE	YEAR	R	L	M	R	L	M	R	L	M	R	L	M
1	1978	64		76	56		63	51		56	60		63
	1979	68		79	60		68	51		63	60		72
	1980	74	65	76	56	58	56	46	44	47	60	58	63
	1981	79	74	79	64	62	63	60	58	68	68	65	68
	1982	77	74	79	64	65	68	64	62	68	68	65	72
2	1976	67		70	41		26	41		35	46		53
	1978	66		74	48		46	44		46	52		52
	1979	69		77	48		52	40		52	52		58
	1980	74	70	77	52	59	58	44	44	52	56	59	63
	1981	81	74	83	63	65	63	60	59	67	66	65	71
	1982	79	74	83	66	70	71	63	65	71	69	70	74
3	1978	72	77	72	41	58	32	41	52	43	55	64	48
	1979	76	81	78	45	58	32	41	55	43	55	66	48
	1980	74	79	78	45	52	48	41	52	53	51	61	58
	1981	76	85	80	48	66	58	55	68	66	61	73	66
	1982	76	86	84	61	77	69	61	77	72	64	79	75
4	1976	69	64	60	35	29	11	35	32	18	41	39	22
	1978	75	73	65	33	41	18	33	41	22	46	53	34
	1979	75	76	74	33	41	22	36	44	30	49	58	39
	1980	81	80	77	39	50	39	46	53	51	55	61	55
	1981	82	83	79	49	61	51	55	67	55	61	69	62
	1982	82	84	81	55	67	59	58	69	65	63	75	65
5	1978	77	70	62	29	33	12	31	36	18	43	47	28
	1979	79	76	71	38	38	24	40	50	35	49	56	38
	1980	79	79	77	40	47	38	43	53	49	49	60	53
	1981	84	83	83	46	58	49	49	66	59	54	68	62
	1982	86	84	83	52	68	59	52	70	65	62	73	65
6	1976	77	67	63	20	19	11	27	31	22	38	37	28
	1979	75	73	70	32	31	21	34	42	35	44	49	41
	1980	80	79	78	34	42	32	44	49	51	51	56	51
	1981	85	83	82	49	56	45	51	60	59	62	65	62
	1982	86	85	83	56	63	54	62	69	65	67	71	65
7	1978	80		68	19		13	29		22	36		27
	1979	75	70	71	23	24	14	25	26	21	37	39	28
	1980	77	76	73	34	33	31	34	39	39	48	48	44
	1981	81	80	79	41	43	36	46	50	44	52	56	50
	1982	82	82	80	46	50	41	50	54	52	55	62	55
8	1976	79	69	66	21	16	11	31	30	20	35	37	24
	1978	81		66	25		11	33		20	38		22
	1979	82	71	72	24	21	11	33	33	26	41	37	28
	1980	86	78	77	37	33	30	41	39	40	51	49	45
	1981	86	80	79	45	45	37	51	49	48	61	58	54
	1982	87	82	80	47	51	43	51	55	54	64	63	56
9	1980	72	68	70	29	31	23	39	35	36	44	39	39
	1981	74	71	73	30	31	30	42	39	39	44	46	43
	1982	72	71	73	33	39	36	42	46	39	46	50	43
10	1980	70	70	67	25	27	25	41	37	39	42	41	39
	1981	73	72	70	29	32	29	42	45	43	45	45	43
	1982	74	75	70	31	32	34	42	45	43	45	45	43
11	1980	67	68	68	24	21	22	37	36	35	42	39	38
	1981	70	71	68	26	24	26	39	39	38	44	43	38
	1982	70	71	68	28	29	30	39	43	43	44	43	43

NOTE. R = READING. M = MATHEMATICS. L = SPELLING IN GRADES 1-2, LANGUAGE ARTS IN GRADES 3-8, AND WRITTEN EXPRESSION IN GRADES 9-11.

A final way of looking at longitudinal achievement trends is to consider the achievement growth of particular groups of students over grade levels and years. This can be done in two ways. The achievement of a class of students (called a quasi-cohort) can be tracked longitudinally over time (e.g., grade 1 in 1978, grade 2 in 1979, etc.), or the achievement of particular students (cohorts) can be tracked over time. The latter approach has the advantage of controlling for spurious changes in average yearly achievement levels caused by in- and out-migration of students at different achievement levels. On the other hand it has the disadvantage of being sensitive to selective attrition (e.g., there may have been a higher rate of attrition among higher-achieving students over time). Thus, both approaches should be considered jointly. This has been done in Table 8.

Median percentiles for more recent cohorts of students (1980-82, 1981-82) generally do not reflect much change in the rate of growth over the two or three years examined. Thus students in these cohorts tended to maintain their standing relative to national norms from one year to the next. Exceptions to this general trend occurred in a few instances. For instance, the grades 1-3 cohort for 1980-82 experienced a decline in reading achievement, the decline apparently occurring between 1981 and 1982. In another instance, the first four cohorts for 1980-82 showed an appreciable increase in language arts achievement over the three years, most of which occurred between 1980 and 1981.

The longitudinal achievement results for cohorts from earlier years (1978-82, 1979-82) are mixed. Generally, achievement declined in going from grade 1 to grade 7, and recovered somewhat in grade 8.

TABLE 8

Cohort, Quasi-cohort, and Non-cohort Median National Percentile Scores for the Total District

		Reading						Language						Mathematics					
		Cohort		Quasi-cohort		Non-cohort		Cohort		Quasi-cohort		Non-cohort		Cohort		Quasi-cohort		Non-cohort	
Years	Grades	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
1978-82	1- 5	43	33	39	33	51	22							56	42	44	39	50	28
	2- 6	34	36	32	36	44	27							36	38	31	38	50	29
	3- 7	32	29	26	26	37	14	44	36	46	35	56	18	27	32	20	30	47	18
	4- 8	23	32	19	30	39	20	33	38	24	35	49	20	19	31	11	29	38	20
1979-82	1- 4	47	39	43	36	43	31							61	44	56	41	56	38
	2- 5	34	33	32	33	34	27							41	42	36	39	45	37
	3- 6	37	36	32	36	39	36	51	47	46	46	49	42	35	38	27	38	39	38
	4- 7	29	29	25	26	31	22	37	38	35	35	42	24	25	33	19	30	28	24
	5- 8	25	32	23	30	29	25	36	38	32	35	34	23	23	31	18	29	26	25
1980-82	1- 3	51	42	41	37	35	34	46	65	41	63	31	54	50	54	44	54	38	47
	2- 4	44	39	34	36	37	29	47	55	40	53	40	39	45	44	41	41	41	34
	3- 5	34	33	29	33	34	25	46	52	41	50	46	42	39	42	35	39	43	34
	4- 6	29	38	25	36	33	33	42	49	37	46	44	38	34	41	31	38	38	34
	5- 7	25	29	23	26	27	19	38	38	36	35	40	21	31	32	28	30	34	24
	6- 8	28	30	25	30	28	25	34	38	31	35	30	23	31	31	26	29	29	25
	9-11	29	29	24	29	18	29	34	30	26	30	20	30	25	28	23	28	15	28
1981-82	1- 2	55	51	51	48	41	37	55	59	51	53	51	43	56	54	50	54	50	50
	2- 3	51	42	44	39	44	32	53	65	47	63	47	49	54	54	60	54	50	47
	3- 4	37	39	37	36	37	25	61	58	54	53	56	35	51	44	43	41	47	31
	4- 5	33	37	33	33	39	22	49	53	46	50	49	34	41	45	38	39	38	28
	5- 6	31	38	27	36	31	27	47	49	44	46	46	31	39	41	37	38	39	29
	6- 7	35	29	33	26	36	14	42	38	39	35	42	18	38	34	36	30	38	18
	7- 8	26	32	25	30	22	20	35	38	31	35	24	20	30	31	26	29	20	20
	9-10	27	27	29	27	15	20	34	36	30	32	18	26	28	31	25	27	15	21
	10-11	31	29	27	29	20	25	36	33	32	30	26	25	31	28	27	28	24	24

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What the quasi-longitudinal and cohort-longitudinal test scores together affirm is that median scores have traditionally been higher at lower grade levels than at higher grade levels. Cohorts of District students had scored high when in grades 1-3 in recent years and then lost ground with their peers in the national norming group over the following two or three years. The patterns of growth within grades, while indicating that achievement scores have generally improved in grades 1-8 in 1982, do not show that cohorts have yet caught up with their prior performances as younger students two or three years earlier. In order to catch up, growth within higher grades must exceed growth within lower grades. What has been actually happening is that, while growth generally exists in all of grades 1-8, it is even stronger at the lower grade levels than at higher grade levels.

Cohort students compared to non-cohort students. Median percentile scores of non-cohort students are also presented for comparison in Table 8. Whereas cohort students are those who could be identified as having been both pretested and posttested, non-cohort students are those who could be identified as having been pretested or posttested but not both, presumably for one of three reasons: (a) after a student was pretested, he or she left the District before the 1982 posttest, (b) a student was available for the 1982 testing only, having newly entered the District, or (c) a student was enrolled at the time of the pretest and the 1982 posttest, but was absent for one of the two testing sessions. Because nearly all students participated in the annual system-wide testing, it was assumed that mobility accounted for the classification of a student as a noncohort.

The table shows that cohort students, in grades 1-4, in 1978 scored lower than non-cohorts, but that in 1979, 1980, and 1981 cohort students generally scored the same as or better than non-cohort students, at all grade levels. This could be interpreted to imply that the District lost better-scoring students from grades 1-4 in 1978, but kept its better-scoring students, at all grade levels, in later years. On the other hand, by 1982, cohort students at all grade levels consistently performed better than students who entered the District in the intervening years. Together, these findings support the contention that although the District lost some of its better-scoring students from the lower grades in 1978, those students continuing in the District over two or more years perform better on the achievement tests than do students transferring into the District.

Achievement within Subdistricts

Although the District has undertaken a reorganization of its subdistrict configurations (there will be only three subdistricts in 1982-83 where there had been five subdistricts in 1976-1982), it is nevertheless interesting to compare performances within the subdistricts according to their 1981-82 configuration. Therefore, a summary of achievement by subdistrict, for the years 1976, 1981, and 1982, for grades 2, 4, 6, and 8, is presented in Table 9a. Generally, the results by subdistrict mirror those seen earlier for the total District. Thus, tremendous growth in achievement has been observed everywhere, most significantly in language arts and mathematics in grades 2 through 6. While not shown in Table 9a, the pattern of achievement growth throughout

Table 9a

Quasi-longitudinal Median Percentiles
1976, 1981, and 1982

All Races

		NW			NE			SE			SW			EOC		
		76	81	82	76	81	82	76	81	82	76	81	82	76	81	82
Reading																
Grade 2	Nat	32	48	48	32	48	51	28	44	48	32	48	48	21	37	44
	LC	51	69	69	51	69	72	46	66	69	51	69	69	37	60	66
Grade 4	Nat	20	33	39	21	39	39	18	33	33	20	33	36	14	25	31
	LC	44	61	66	44	66	66	44	61	61	44	61	63	35	49	58
Grade 6	Nat	20	36	40	20	36	40	14	32	35	20	38	40	7	23	28
	LC	52	67	72	47	67	72	38	61	65	47	70	72	20	39	56
Grade 8	Nat	22	32	34	28	32	37	12	32	32	14	32	29	6	23	20
	LC	57	66	70	59	66	73	35	66	66	38	66	61	21	51	47
Language Arts																
Grade 4	Nat	20	49	53	25	51	58	20	44	49	21	51	53	15	20	44
	LC	43	71	75	46	73	78	39	67	71	43	73	75	32	61	67
Grade 6	Nat	22	42	49	20	42	52	16	44	49	20	46	49	9	31	36
	LC	45	69	74	42	69	77	37	63	70	41	71	74	19	56	52
Grade 8	Nat	25	36	39	29	36	42	14	31	35	17	34	36	8	23	26
	LC	52	64	67	56	64	70	30	58	63	37	61	64	18	47	51
Mathematics																
Grade 2	Nat	34	59	54	34	50	59	29	45	54	29	50	59	15	41	50
	LC	60	77	74	60	71	77	53	67	74	53	71	77	26	63	71
Grade 4	Nat	8	41	47	10	41	44	8	34	41	8	38	44	2	28	34
	LC	32	65	71	32	65	68	27	59	65	27	62	68	11	51	59
Grade 6	Nat	15	41	46	11	43	46	9	34	34	9	41	43	2	22	26
	LC	38	67	72	35	70	72	31	59	59	35	67	70	11	45	51
Grade 8	Nat	18	32	36	22	34	39	6	29	31	9	27	31	2	16	19
	LC	43	61	65	49	63	67	24	56	58	26	54	58	11	35	40

Note. Language arts for the second grade in 1976 were not available.

Table 9b

Quasi-longitudinal Median Percentiles
1976, 1981, and 1982

White Students

		NW			NE			SE			SW		
		76	81	82	76	81	82	76	81	82	76	81	82
Reading													
Grade 2	Nat	55	69	69	51	74	69	36	51	54	40	54	57
	LC	76	84	84	70	87	84	58	72	74	60	74	77
Grade 4	Nat	53	73	74	43	68	68	25	45	48	33	50	50
	LC	82	91	91	72	88	88	54	73	75	61	77	77
Grade 6	Nat	62	69	70	44	65	65	30	40	48	38	56	58
	LC	88	91	92	80	89	89	64	72	78	71	84	85
Grade 8	Nat	56	69	69	47	58	64	23	43	44	33	53	49
	LC	89	91	91	81	88	89	57	80	81	67	86	84
Language Arts													
Grade 4	Nat	56	81	79	42	74	76	25	53	60	35	62	62
	LC	79	91	90	68	87	88	49	75	79	58	80	80
Grade 6	Nat	62	73	76	44	68	70	25	47	52	32	61	65
	LC	85	89	90	69	86	87	50	73	77	59	82	84
Grade 8	Nat	55	75	73	44	62	68	24	40	48	32	51	51
	LC	82	90	89	74	84	87	50	68	74	61	76	76
Mathematics													
Grade 2	Nat	61	78	75	50	71	75	40	54	63	40	63	67
	LC	79	89	87	73	85	87	65	74	80	65	80	83
Grade 4	Nat	52	74	77	32	63	63	22	47	50	26	50	54
	LC	79	89	90	60	83	83	47	71	74	52	74	77
Grade 6	Nat	57	70	74	38	63	63	22	43	48	25	58	59
	LC	83	88	90	63	85	85	50	70	74	55	81	82
Grade 8	Nat	56	76	73	43	62	64	18	41	43	26	47	49
	LC	82	91	89	72	84	85	41	69	71	55	74	76

Note. Language Arts scores for the second grade in 1976 were not available.

Table 9c

Quasi-longitudinal Median Percentiles
1976, 1981, and 1982

Black Students

		NW			NE			SE			SW			EOC		
		76	81	82	76	81	82	76	81	82	76	81	82	76	81	82
Reading																
Grade 2	Nat	21	37	37	23	32	34	21	41	41	32	51	48	21	39	44
	LC	37	60	60	37	52	56	37	63	63	51	72	69	37	62	66
Grade 4	Nat	11	21	27	11	21	27	12	25	25	14	31	36	14	25	31
	LC	28	43	52	28	43	52	32	49	49	35	58	63	35	49	58
Grade 6	Nat	2	19	19	3	15	18	7	22	23	11	36	38	7	23	28
	LC	11	42	42	14	34	39	20	47	49	29	67	70	20	49	56
Grade 8	Nat	5	14	18	4	11	15	4	19	19	7	29	29	6	20	19
	LC	18	37	43	18	31	39	18	45	45	25	61	61	21	47	45
Language Arts																
Grade 4	Nat	11	31	37	11	28	39	15	35	39	15	51	55	15	37	44
	LC	25	53	61	25	50	63	32	58	63	32	73	76	32	61	67
Grade 6	Nat	4	21	28	4	23	31	9	30	32	12	46	49	9	31	36
	LC	14	42	52	12	44	56	21	54	58	31	71	74	19	56	62
Grade 8	Nat	5	17	21	4	13	17	5	21	23	10	31	35	8	23	26
	LC	14	35	43	11	27	35	14	43	47	23	58	63	18	47	52
Mathematics																
Grade 2	Nat	15	45	45	20	31	50	18	31	41	24	50	54	15	41	50
	LC	26	67	67	26	52	71	26	52	63	44	71	74	26	63	71
Grade 4	Nat	2	25	31	1	22	28	2	25	28	4	38	44	2	28	38
	LC	8	47	55	6	43	51	8	47	51	18	62	68	11	51	62
Grade 6	Nat	1	18	24	1	16	24	2	20	20	6	38	41	2	20	26
	LC	9	38	48	6	35	48	11	41	41	25	65	67	11	41	51
Grade 8	Nat	2	17	19	2	11	16	2	19	22	3	25	27	2	16	17
	LC	11	37	40	8	28	35	8	40	45	13	51	54	11	35	37

Note. Language Arts scores for the second grade in 1976 were not available.

Table 9d

Quasi-longitudinal Median Percentiles
1976, 1981, and 1982

Hispanic Students

		NW			NE			SE			SW		
		76	81	82	76	81	82	76	81	82	76	81	82
Reading													
Grade 2	Nat	24	37	37	24	43	41	23	34	44	28	34	44
	LC	41	60	60	37	65	63	39	56	66	46	56	66
Grade 4	Nat	14	29	33	16	29	31	12	29	31	14	29	31
	LC	35	55	61	38	55	58	30	55	58	32	55	58
Grade 6	Nat	10	28	35	10	25	30	11	23	29	10	28	33
	LC	29	56	65	27	51	58	29	49	57	27	56	62
Grade 8	Nat	10	23	25	17	25	25	12	26	28	10	23	19
	LC	31	51	55	42	55	55	35	57	59	29	51	45
Language Arts													
Grade 4	Nat	13	42	49	20	44	49	15	44	44	17	44	49
	LC	29	65	71	43	67	71	32	67	67	36	67	71
Grade 6	Nat	15	32	42	13	32	43	13	32	41	13	36	42
	LC	31	58	69	31	58	70	31	58	67	29	62	69
Grade 8	Nat	11	23	28	20	27	30	16	25	35	12	23	28
	LC	25	47	55	39	53	56	32	49	63	25	47	55
Mathematics													
Grade 2	Nat	24	50	45	20	41	50	29	41	50	24	45	54
	LC	35	71	67	35	63	71	44	63	71	35	67	74
Grade 4	Nat	4	34	44	6	38	41	4	28	34	4	31	41
	LC	14	59	68	22	62	65	18	51	59	18	55	65
Grade 6	Nat	9	36	38	6	42	48	8	31	34	6	31	38
	LC	28	62	65	22	69	74	25	57	59	19	57	65
Grade 8	Nat	5	23	29	13	34	32	6	29	27	5	22	25
	LC	18	47	56	33	63	61	23	56	54	20	45	51

Note. Language Arts scores for the second grade in 1976 were not available.

the ensuing years following 1976, within each subdistrict, was similar to that shown in Tables 7a and 7b. In other words, the most pronounced improvement occurred between 1979-80 and 1981-82. Furthermore, the improvement observed in all subdistricts could be attributed primarily to the great gains made by District Black and Hispanic students.

Achievement levels across subdistricts in 1981-82 were very similar. Generally, the Northeast Subdistrict had the highest median percentiles, though these were not appreciably different from those attained by the other subdistricts except for East Oak Cliff which was consistently lower. In terms of achievement gains over the last several years, the subdistricts were virtually indistinguishable.

Locally Developed Achievement Tests

In this section, District-wide achievement tests on the locally-developed Basic Objectives Assessment Test (BOAT), and Assessment of Baseline Curriculum (ABC) are presented.

Assessment of Baseline Curriculum (ABC)

Over the past two years, the Office of Test Development, has been involved with the development of a criterion-referenced testing system aimed at measuring the attainment of mastery of the objectives in the District's baseline curriculum. At present, this system has two components, each directed toward measuring progress in grades 1 through 3: a set of classroom tests to be used by teachers at their discretion, and a survey test for providing standardized measurement of year-end performance on promotion/retention objectives--a subset of the larger set

of baseline objectives. It is the results of the survey tests that are of concern here.

As part of its five-year plan for instructional improvement, the District has established standards for student performance in grades 1 through 3. Students' status toward attainment of these standards are taken into consideration in determining whether individuals will be promoted or retained--thus the term, "promotion/retention, objectives." The Assessment of Baseline Curriculum survey tests (ABC), were administered to students in grades 1 through 3, for the first time, in spring 1982. The results from this testing are shown in Tables 10, 11, and 12, where the precent of students mastering each objective (for each grade level) is given.

Since results are not available for earlier years (this was the first administration of the ABC), interpretation is obviously limited. A student is considered to have "mastered" an objective measured by the ABC if he/she correctly answers roughly 75 percent of the items pertaining to that objective. Since this was the first large-scale administration of the ABC, however, this criterion of mastery has not yet been adopted in any formal sense. At all three grade levels, a majority of students could be said to have mastered all baseline objectives measured--the only exception occurred in language arts at grade 3 where only 45 percent mastered the objective pertaining to the use of commas, periods, apostrophes, and colons. On many of the objectives, District-wide performance was exceptionally high. This was especially true for grades 1 and 2 in mathematics and, to a lesser extent, language arts.

TABLE 10

Percentages of Grade 1 Students Mastering
Promotion/Retention Objectives

	Ethnicity			
	All	White	Black	Hispanic
MATHEMATICS				
Identify geometric figures	91	94	90	90
Identify ordinal position	96	98	96	90
Recall addition facts	92	95	90	93
Solve addition story problems	86	91	84	86
Recall subtraction facts	81	84	79	82
Solve subtraction story problems	84	90	80	85
Add two numbers (sum + 99)	79	85	74	80
Tell time on the hour	94	96	94	95
Subtract two numbers (each $\leq$ 99)	68	75	63	71
LANGUAGE ARTS				
Read with understanding	55	66	51	52
Identify capital and small letters	90	92	88	90
Identify beginning consonant sounds	90	94	87	90
Read CVC words	83	88	81	82
Read CV and CVCC words	79	87	77	75
Read words with "s" and "es" endings	75	83	73	70
Read Level 1 sight vocab. words	72	81	69	69
Capitalize first word in sentences	70	79	67	66
Punctuate a simple sentence	63	73	59	60

TABLE 11

Percentages of Grade 2 Students Mastering
Promotion/Retention Objectives

	Ethnicity			
	All	White	Black	Hispanic
MATHEMATICS				
Recall addition facts	98	99	98	98
Add three or more numbers (sum to 18)	92	94	91	94
Recall subtraction facts	90	91	90	90
Read and write whole numbers to 100	91	93	90	89
Identify ordinal position (1-31)	85	91	82	85
Compare a number pattern	79	86	75	82
Add whole numbers (sum to 99)	82	85	80	84
Solve addition word problems	78	83	74	79
Identify fractional parts	89	91	87	89
Tell time on the hour and half hour	81	86	78	82
Find the sum of a set of coins	68	76	64	69
Add whole numbers (sum to 999)	94	94	93	95
Subtract two numbers (each $\leq$ 999)	90	90	89	91
LANGUAGE ARTS				
Read with understanding	81	88	79	77
Identify beginning consonant sounds	86	94	81	87
Read alternate long vowel spellings	97	98	96	96
Identify base words	75	83	72	72
Identify contractions	92	96	91	92
Read Level 2 sight vocabulary words	92	95	90	92
Use a period, comma, and apostrophe	60	67	57	58
Expand sentences	85	92	82	84
Alphabetize groups of words	74	81	71	74

TABLE 12

Percentages of Grade 3 Students Mastering
Promotion/Retention Objectives

	Ethnicity			
	All	White	Black	Hispanic
MATHEMATICS				
Read and write whole numbers to 999	97	99	96	97
Add two numbers (each $\leq$ 999)	84	88	81	87
Add three numbers (each $\leq$ 999)	77	80	74	79
Subtract two numbers (each $\leq$ 999)	59	67	54	62
Solve word problems	69	76	64	71
Recall multiplication facts (to 5 X 9)	89	91	87	90
Identify customary and metric numbers	53	69	47	46
Tell time to five minute intervals	64	74	58	66
Select money to pay for a purchase	79	85	75	79
Identify fractional parts to tenths	78	84	74	79
LANGUAGE ARTS				
Read with understanding	77	87	74	71
Read words with silent letters	79	90	74	77
Read words with vowels followed by "r"	97	99	97	96
Use common prefixes	71	81	71	62
Use common suffixes	70	84	67	60
Use plural forms of nouns	55	63	52	49
Read Level 3 sight vocabulary words	96	98	96	95
Use comma, period, apostrophe, colon	45	54	43	40

Third-grade performance on the ABC did not match the performance in the earlier grades.

In grade 1, relative to the other objectives, students apparently found those involving addition and subtraction of two numbers most difficult, in mathematics, and reading with understanding and punctuating simple sentences most difficult in language arts. Many students also had difficulty with the objectives involving reading of vocabulary words and with capitalizing first words in sentences.

Students in grade 2 found the objectives concerning finding the sum of a set of coins, solving word problems (the problems were read aloud to the examinees), and comparing number patterns to be the most difficult in mathematics. In language arts the most difficult objectives to master were those involving punctuation, alphabetization, and the identification of base words.

From Table 12 it would appear that grade 3 students had more difficulty in mastering their mathematics objectives than did children at lower grade levels. The objectives involving subtraction, word problems, metric numbers, and telling time were particularly troublesome. The language arts objectives, at this grade level, were also more difficult than those given for lower grade levels. Performance was particularly low on objectives concerned with punctuation and the use of plural forms of nouns.

Some parallels can be drawn between performance on a subset of the grade 3 ABC objectives and similar objectives on the Texas Assessment of Basic Skills (TABS). For instance, both the ABC and TABS contained items measuring students' skills in subtraction. On both tests, performance on

this objective was low relative to performance on other mathematics objectives. On the other hand, performance was high, on both tests, on objectives dealing with simple multiplication. In language arts, on the ABC, and writing, on the TABS, third-grade students performed poorest on similar objectives measuring skill in using punctuation and grammar.

Basic Objectives Assessment Test (BOAT)

The locally-developed functional literacy test, the BOAT, was administered early in 1982 (spring of the 1981-82 school year). The BOAT measured student progress toward mastery of basic skills and knowledge in seven functional applications: Consumerism, Community, Medical, Home, Employment, Government, and Information Sources.

All students, except those exempted for reasons given earlier, were scheduled to be tested in grade 8. Additionally, those students in grades 9-12 who had not attained a score of 70% or higher when tested in earlier years or who were not present for testing in previous years were scheduled for testing in 1982. Those students who had attained a score of 70% or higher in previous years were not retested but are included below in the reporting of the total numbers and percentages of students who have passed the test.

Grade 8 performance. Table 13 displays median percent-correct scores for each subtest as well as the total test for grade 8, over two years.

An individual percent-correct score of 70% has been adopted as the passing score for the BOAT. The results for the past year (1981-82) are remarkedly similar to those from the previous year. Since the median for the total test for all students in the District was 70%, approximately

TABLE 13

Grade 8 Median Percent Correct Scores on the BOAT
for 1980-81 and 1981-82

	All Races		White		Black		Hispanic	
	'81	'82	'81	'82	'81	'82	'81	'82
Consumerism	72	76	84	84	68	68	72	72
Community	77	77	87	87	73	73	73	73
Medical	80	80	87	87	80	80	73	80
Home	65	65	80	80	60	60	60	65
Employment	70	70	80	80	70	70	70	70
Government	60	60	73	73	53	53	53	53
Information Sources	60	60	70	70	50	50	50	50
Total Test	70	71	81	82	66	67	67	68

TABLE 14

Summary of High School BOAT Results for Students
Tested in 1982 or Previously

	Grades				
	9	10	11	12	All
Number Tested	8546	8029	6879	6264	29718
Percent Tested	86	90	93	94	90
Number Passed	5820	6477	6163	5731	24191
Percent Passed	68	81	90	91	81

half of the students in grade 8 passed the BOAT. Median performance was highest in Medical and lowest in Government and Information Sources, generally.

High school performance. The cumulative percentages of students tested who had passed the BOAT by 1982 are presented in Table 14. These cumulative percentages are not appreciably different from those presented a year ago.

From Table 14 it can be concluded that over 500 twelfth graders had failed to pass the BOAT by April 1982. This compares with over 600 a year ago. While no longer intended as a requirement for graduation, it had been projected that by the end of next year approximately 375 seniors still would have failed to have passed the BOAT. Furthermore, in future years, it is unlikely that the numbers of seniors failing to pass would have decreased much below 300. This means that there would always have been some appreciable number of students failing to pass the BOAT.

In a study currently in progress, the achievement histories of over 500 seniors who have repeatedly failed to pass the BOAT are being examined. Preliminary results suggest that these students have a history of poor achievement in the classroom and on standardized tests. Year after year these students consistently have been counted among the District's poorest achievers.

Texas Assessment of Basic Skills

The Texas Assessment of Basic Skills (TABS) tests are designed to measure the achievement of students in Texas school districts in reading, mathematics, and writing. The tests are intended to help identify

students who have not mastered learning objectives which are considered essential for all Texas students. In the 1981-82 spring semester, these tests were administered to DISD students, and all other students in the state of Texas, in the third, fifth, and ninth grades. In addition, students who had performed poorly on the ninth-grade test in previous years, were given the opportunity to try again in the 10th or 11th grade.

Grades 3 and 5. A summary of the District's third- and fifth-grade performance on the TABS is presented in Table 15. Both groups of students exhibited general improvement in 1981-82 over the previous year. An exception, at both grade levels, occurred in the percentages of students judged to have acceptable writing skills. Here, both third and fifth graders declined relative to their counterparts tested a year earlier.

Grade 9. Ninth-grade performance on the TABS is summarized in Table 16. Again improvement was noted in 1981-82 over the previous year in reading and mathematics. However, the percentage of students mastering the writing objectives declined appreciably in 1981-82; a result due exclusively to poorer performance on the writing exercise despite higher performance on the other writing objectives.

Over all grades tested, the mastery rate on each multiple-choice objective in mathematics, reading, and writing was generally higher in 1982 than in 1981, sometimes the same, seldom lower. Thus, local students continued to improve upon their own past performances within grade level. However, over all grades tested, the mastery rate on the writing exercise was lower in 1982 than in 1981. Perhaps this fact flags a real weakness in basic skills locally. On the other hand, because the

TABLE 15

Summary of Grades 3 and 5 Performance on the TABS

	All Races		White		Black		Hispanic	
	'81	'82	'81	'82	'81	'82	'81	'82
GRADE 3								
Reading								
Mean % Obj. Mastered	74	80	85	88	69	79	68	72
Mean % Items Correct	77	81	85	88	74	81	72	76
Mathematics								
Mean % Obj. Mastered	75	80	85	87	70	78	73	78
Mean % Items Correct	79	82	86	87	75	81	77	81
Writing								
Mean % Obj. Mastered	75	81	86	89	70	79	70	76
Mean % Items Correct	78	83	87	89	75	82	75	80
Pct. Acceptable Writing	86	67	95	74	81	64	85	64
GRADE 5								
Reading								
Mean % Obj. Mastered	61	67	77	79	54	63	57	62
Mean % Items Correct	68	71	79	80	63	69	65	68
Mathematics								
Mean % Obj. Mastered	65	69	78	80	58	64	66	69
Mean % Items Correct	71	73	80	81	65	69	71	73
Writing								
Mean % Ojb. Mastered	77	77	87	85	72	75	75	74
Mean % Items Correct	80	80	87	86	76	79	78	78
Pct. Acceptable Writing	75	64	87	75	69	59	74	62

TABLE 16

Summary of Grade 9 Performance on the TABS

	All Races		White		Black		Hispanic	
	'81	'82	'81	'82	'81	'82	'81	'82
Reading								
Mean % Obj. Mastered	60	61	78	78	50	54	57	56
Percent Mastering	53	56	80	80	39	46	50	50
Mathematics								
Mean % Obj. Mastered	62	66	79	79	52	59	62	68
Percent Mastering	55	62	80	80	40	51	55	64
Writing								
Mean % Obj. Mastered	70	74	84	86	62	69	69	70
Percent Mastering	71	62	89	82	61	53	71	57
Pct. Acceptable Writing	78	65	92	85	69	57	78	61

technique for scoring the writing exercise is less objective than that for scoring the multiple-choice objectives, this past year's lower writing scores may simply reflect inconsistency in a largely subjective scoring technique.

Summary

District achievement in 1981-82 can be viewed as a general improvement over that observed in 1980-81 which in turn marked a major improvement over preceding years. Appreciable gains were noted particularly among the District's minority students. These trends were observed at nearly all grade levels in all areas measured.

The most pronounced gains in achievement continue to be seen in the early grades. Whereas a year ago this trend was observed in grades 1 through 4 or 5, in 1981-82 this trend continued through grades 5 or 6. In the secondary schools however, year-to-year gains have not been so dramatic. Thus only slight improvement can be noted for grades 7 and 8, and virtually no change for grades 9 through 11. Thus, while District students match or even surpass the test performances of students nationally through elementary school, they do not maintain this pace as they progress through secondary school. This is particularly evident when seventh-grade performance is compared with sixth-grade performance.

Related Literature

Meier, James A. Basic Objectives Assessment Tests Results, 1982 (IS82-002), August 1982.

Meier, James A. A Report of the Texas Assessment of Basic Skills, 1982 (IS82-013), June 1982.

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